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ABSTRACT

This report from the Goal 3 Technical Planning Subgroup focuses on three areas that have been identified as important to improving the citizenship education of students: community service, voter registration of 18- to 20-year-olds, and knowledge of citizenship. (The aim of Goal 3 of the National Education Goals is that by the year 2000 American students will have competency in various subject disciplines so they will be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment.) Within each of these three areas the report examines the available means by which assessment of student progress can be made. The recommendations made by the report include utilizing the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to collect data in each of the three areas. (DB)

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NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS PANEL

ASSESSING CITIZENSHIP

THE GOAL 3 TECHNICAL PLANNING SUBGROUP ON CITIZENSHIP

Report to the National Education Goals Panel

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ASSESSING CITIZENSHIP:
A REPORT FROM THE GOAL 3
TECHNICAL PLANNING SUBGROUP ON CITIZENSHIP

Goal 3: **By the year 2000, American students will leave grades four, eight and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment in our modern economy.**

Objectives:

- The academic performance of elementary and secondary students will increase significantly in every quartile, and the distribution of minority students in each level will more closely reflect the student population as a whole.
- The percentage of students who demonstrate the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively will increase substantially.
- All students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility.
- The percentage of students who are competent in more than one language will substantially increase.
- All students will be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural heritage of this nation and about the world community.

I. Introduction

A July 1991 statement to the National Education Goals Panel from the Technical Planning Subgroup on Citizenship recommended three indicators for assessing citizenship. These were community service, voter registration of 18- to 20-year-olds, and knowledge of citizenship. The Goals Panel concurred with these recommendations.

This report takes a closer look at available indicators in these three areas in terms of needed definitions of what knowledge of citizenship is and how to demonstrate it. This report suggests indicators that, with some preparation, can be included in the Goals Panel's reports on the nation's progress toward the National Education Goals. It also recommends that the Goals Panel sponsor an effort to develop content standards for citizenship commensurate with the standard-setting efforts in other academic subjects.

II. Citizenship: A Central Goal of Education

Public education, as originally intended, means education of the people for citizenship. Of late, it has become even more important to learn what young people know about their responsibilities in society and to know as much about their education for citizenship as we know about how they perform academically in various subjects or in preparation for the workplace.

Traditionally, the behavior of each youthful generation causes alarm from those who are older. However, a mixture of unparalleled situations and trends has changed the parameters for growing up in American society. As many have observed, the transition to independent adulthood is more difficult and uncertain than ever before. Young people are increasingly isolated from adult examples, yet buffeted by media images of adult-sanctioned behavior. There is justification for more alarm than usual.

A 1989 survey by Peter Hart and Associates found that non-voters aged 18 to 24 had dim views of the role of government and a limited concept of citizenship -- a good citizen is merely expected not to hurt anyone or break the law, according to those who responded to the survey. Of the 3.7 million 18-year-olds eligible to vote in the 1988 elections, only 1.6 million were registered and only 1.2 million actually voted. Both young high school students and their teachers, in the Hart survey, admitted that the current generation is less willing to get involved in activities outside of its personal sphere than previous ones. For example, only 12% of the students said that voting was an indicator of good citizenship and 62% of the youth were not involved in community or neighborhood service in any manner. A disturbing result found that only 19% of the teachers believed schools were very successful at encouraging citizenship.

The rise in crime committed by youth, in teen-age pregnancies, in incidence of public intolerance toward others -- all of these are warning signals about decreasing "achievement" in citizenship. They portend a future where the public is intent upon feeling good, not doing good.

If a major purpose of the National Education Goals is to strengthen the values and capabilities that make the nation highly competitive, then civic knowledge and skills -- and the capacity to apply those skills experientially -- deserve as much attention as performance in traditional academic subjects. An informed citizenry, willing to contribute to problem solving and skilled in working through situations with others, is as important to the nation's interests as academic performance and workforce preparation.

National data regarding voter registration and civic education were reported in the 1991 Goals Report while community service data were unavailable and went unreported. While there are pieces of information and data-gathering in all three areas, there is presently no data available to use on a state-by-state basis to assess achievement or progress on any of these indicators. We urge the Panel to undertake a systematic, national effort to measure civic education on a state-by-state basis, just as it has committed to do for other academic subjects. Absent such an effort, the information will remain fragmented and unusable for the purposes of the National Education Goals Panel and the citizenship aspect of Goal 3 will remain a rhetorical commitment not a real one. Fortunately, there are some data-gathering initiatives that are not costly and are built upon existing systems. These are recommended below.

III. Available and Potential Indicators of Citizenship Achievement

We have searched for indicators in each of the three areas adopted by the Goals Panel -- knowledge of citizenship, community service, and voter registration of 18- to 20-year-olds. Our recommendations for each of these areas can be developed within existing data collection efforts.

A. Knowledge of Citizenship

The knowledge base for citizen action is important. In American schools, this generally is provided in civics or government courses or units, covering knowledge of the institutions of government and how citizen participation can be affected. However, according to the State Assessment Center of the Council of Chief State School Officers, no more than two or three states attempt to assess knowledge of citizenship (in Maryland, for example, a passing grade on a state citizenship test is required for graduation). It also is generally recognized that social studies itself, of which civics most often is a part, is not assessed well.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) separates citizenship/civics from social studies. Its most recent assessment of civics knowledge of 4th, 8th, and 12th graders (1988) was included in the 1991 Goals Report. However, there are no future plans to collect these data nor are there available state-by-state data in this area.

Recommendation:

- *Achievement Scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress [data source, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)].* Knowledge of citizenship (an understanding of our political, legal and economic systems and of the rights and duties of citizens) should be added to the "basic" academic subjects included in the state-by-state NAEP data collection activities, with information provided every three years at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels. Additional resources for NAEP will be required to accomplish this, as well as Congressional authorization.

B. Community Service

The objectives of Goal 3 include a statement that "all students will be involved in activities that promote and demonstrate good citizenship, community service, and personal responsibility." The National Education Goals Panel should operationally define this goal objective in terms of "service learning," making the statement that community service properly performed provides and promotes an opportunity for reflection. Community service, linked to an academic curriculum, is an act of learning, with outcomes that can be determined and measured. This will, of course, take thoughtful consideration and planning in the standard-setting process discussed under Section IV, below.

Service learning authentically engages students in addressing unmet needs in their school and larger community, and advances learning and performance outcomes of specific subject areas, particularly, but not exclusively, citizenship. Citizenship values and understandings are learned in the context of personal application through community service activities linked with a civics education or government program.

For citizenship principles to be understood, community service activities cannot stand freely but must be integrated, in a developmentally appropriate manner, into the curriculum. This means that service learning includes opportunities for structured discussion, reflection, and writing related to, or arising directly from, the service experience. Citizenship education that properly employs service learning methods transforms community service into a conscious act of citizenship and the school into a living laboratory of democracy.

National surveys provide limited data in this area. Such surveys have been conducted in the past three years by groups such as the Independent Sector, People For the American Way, and the National Girl Scouts. None of these surveys provide state-by-state data.

The High School and Beyond longitudinal study conducted by the U.S. Office of Education included a minimal reference to community service in its questionnaires; it has remained a minor interest in follow-up studies. A new study, the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS-88), began with a sample of about 25,000 eighth graders. A 1990 follow-up, with about 20,000 in the sample, contains questions about community service participation. The sample, however, is too small to be used as state-by-state data by the National Education Goals Panel; only in the eight largest states are there enough participants to provide state data.

The recently enacted National and Community Service Act established a Commission to oversee the awarding of grants under various service programs. $16.3 million were awarded in June 1992 for K-12 service learning and community service initiatives. The Commission's grant application required states to assess the availability and incidence of community service within states. Forty-seven states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico were awarded grants. The criteria for assessment of state efforts fall into two general areas. One is process, such as the number of units of service learning offered through schools or the number of people/agencies served by youth. The other is outcomes, such as the effect on community well-being because of student service or a documented reduction in youth crime. The latter indicators, according to Glen White of the University of Kansas, Chair of the Commission's Evaluation Committee, are much more difficult to document, but should be part of the discussion. The Commission will use outside monitors to assess the compliance of states with their grant intentions. It also is preparing to issue a "state of the country" report similar to the "state of health" presented by the Surgeon General, which will include anecdotal reporting as well as data from the states.

Recommendations:

- *Descriptive Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.* To the extent feasible, NAEP should include in its data collection supportive information for evidence of community service and the degree to which it is linked to the curriculum or just encouraged as a separate activity. NAEP provides a considerable service to the education community through ancillary questions regarding such items as homework, television viewing and teaching methods. It has the experience to provide elaborated information in the area of citizenship.

- *State Grants Under the National and Community Service Act.* The National Education Goals Panel, in collaboration with the Commission on National and Community Service, should analyze the K–12 grant programs from the various states funded under the National and Community Service Act and identify common indicators based on the most frequent sources of data. The Panel should convene a group of experts to review and supplement the indicators to assure that they reflect quality indices of service learning in the civics or government curriculum, such as: offering credit for service and providing courses on civic involvement; emphasizing reflection on service; and offering sequential opportunities for service, beginning in the early grades and gradually becoming more sophisticated. This effort should result in a set of high-quality indicators for service learning that could become a basis for assessment of citizenship among the states, with evidence collected at the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades to parallel the academic subject assessments.

- To encourage the development of state data on citizenship, the National Education Goals Panel should recommend that the Commission on National and Community Service make discretionary funding available to each participating state which has developed a data-collection system on community service as a condition of receiving funds.

C. Voter Registration

Voting represents the most basic expression of citizenship. It provides the opportunity for every citizen to participate in the democratic process. In this country, a necessary precursor to exercising this right is registering to vote.

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on voter registration for different age populations (as well as for gender and race). Its reports lump ages 18 to 24 together, although the Bureau has separate national data on 18-year-olds. This information is not detailed enough to provide state-by-state data, according to Jerry Jennings, who analyzes this data for the Bureau. The lack of a sufficient sample in smaller states makes it almost impossible at this time to provide state data on voter registration.

Similarly, the data available from each state is quite varied. Some states have the information; some make no attempt to collect it.

Because the schools are a centralized place for reaching most 18-year-olds, the focus of states on collecting voter registration data should be on the secondary schools.

Recommendations:

- *Descriptive Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.* NAEP should include in its data collection supportive information for evidence of voter registration and the extent to which it is linked to the curriculum or encouraged as separate school-based activities.

- The National Education Goals Panel should ask the governors to identify how many 18-year-olds in their states are registered to vote. If they presently have no way of reporting this figure, they should be asked to develop a mechanism for collecting this information. Perhaps these data can be collected through the schools.

IV. Setting Standards for Citizenship

The report of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing listed three basic reasons for national standards: to promote educational equity; to preserve democracy and enhance the civic culture; and to improve economic competitiveness. The report also proposed that the standard-setting process be extended from the five core subjects to citizenship education, foreign languages, and the arts. In making their recommendations, the Council recognized the essential character of citizenship learning in both America's schools and in its future.

The Panel should encourage an effort to establish national standards in citizenship much as standards in history, geography and science are being developed. Such an effort should be an occasion to bring together the different constituencies in the areas of civics knowledge and service learning in order to articulate what the nation's youth should both know and demonstrate to give meaning to the ideal of responsible citizenship.

Recommendation:

- Support should be given for the development of standards for knowledge of citizenship commensurate with the standard-setting efforts in other academic subjects. Furthermore, much as performance assessment in the other academic subjects is being developed, so should performance standards for citizenship knowledge ultimately include an action component -- community service learning.y

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